

Political Parties and Voters

Consider As You Read

- What is the two-party system, and what role do third parties play?
- Who votes, and why do some people not vote?

candidates
people running for office

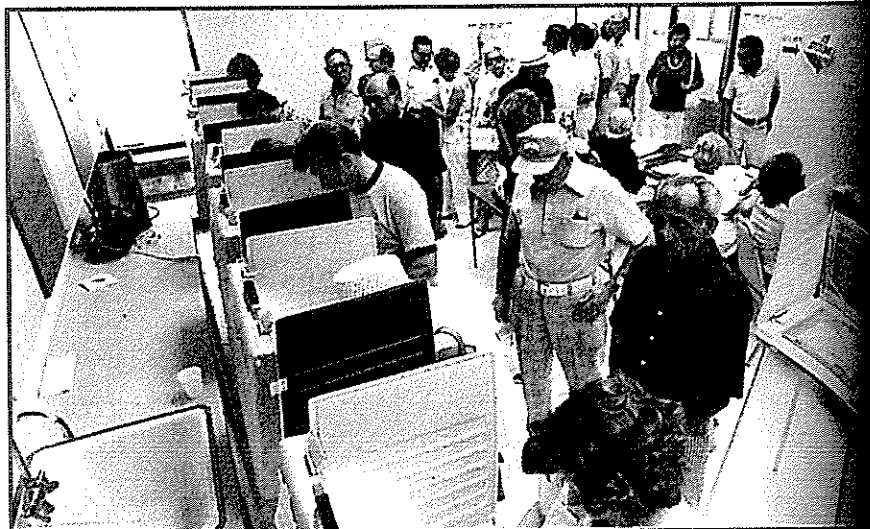
polling places
places to vote

Every four years, on the first Tuesday in November, voters decide who will lead the nation. Then, and at other times during the year, people take an active role in government by making their choice for federal, state, and local leaders. Months of campaigning and debating end on Election Day, and **candidates** wait for the voters to decide who will win or lose the elections. After the **polling places** close, people watch television to learn the election results. Only then do people know who will lead the nation.

The Two-Party System

platform
a political party's plan of action for the government

Two political parties, the Republicans and Democrats, are an important part of every election. Political parties do find jobs for the nation. First, political parties set goals for the nation by developing a party **platform**. Second, in



By voting, citizens choose who leads their government.



Through advertising, political parties inform the public.

order to carry out the platform, political parties are involved in elections. You will read about the election process in Chapter 15.

Third, parties inform the American people about the candidates and about the platform. They tell voters about problems they think the government needs to solve, and they make suggestions for solving those problems. Through advertising, speeches, and letters, parties are able to make their ideas known. Fourth, by getting their members into Congress and state legislatures, political parties put their platform ideas into action. Finally, parties are in competition with one another to get their members in government. Each party checks on the other to make sure that the party follows through on promises it made during campaigns.

The United States has a two-party system of government. The Democrats and Republicans have been elected to most positions in the government. The two-party system began more than two hundred years ago. The Framers of the Constitution and George Washington did not want to have any political parties because they felt parties would lead to fighting within the government. However, our two-party system began soon after the Constitution was written. One party, the Federalists, worked for the ratification of the Constitution. The opposing party, the Anti-Federalists, felt the Constitution gave too much power to the federal government. As time passed these parties changed. The

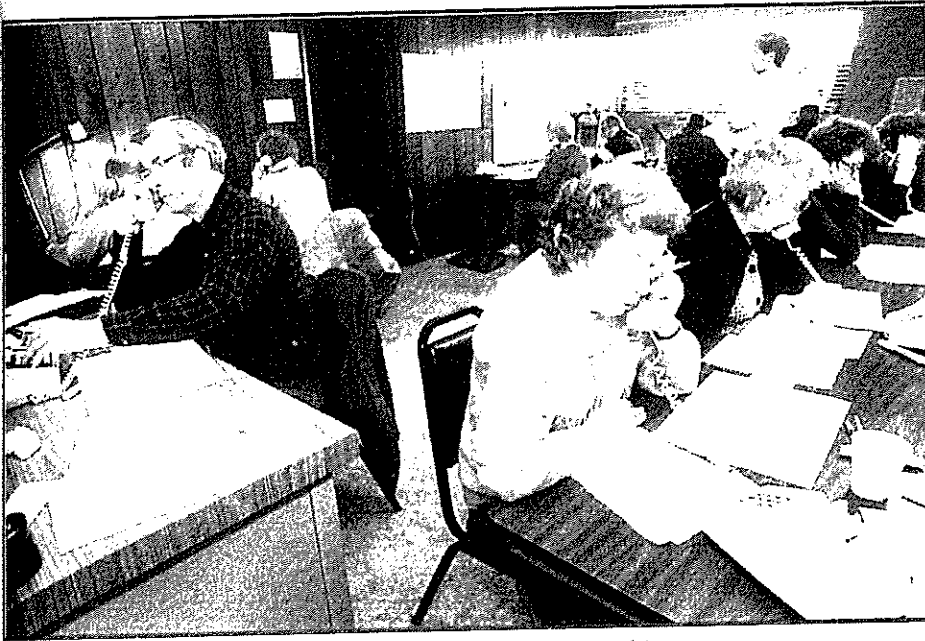
Federalist Party later became the Republican Party. The Anti-Federalists became the Democratic Party. The Republican and Democratic parties have changed their goals and platforms many times since they first began.

Third Parties

Republicans and Democrats control most elected government offices, but they are not the only political parties. The nation has smaller political parties called third parties. Third parties are started for three reasons. Some people start a third party because they have a different idea of how government should be organized than the Democrats and Republicans do. For example, the Libertarian Party was formed in 1971 to represent people who believe Americans should be free from the control of government. Second, third parties form to support one important issue such as environmental problems or women's rights. Third, sometimes members of the two major parties become unhappy with the way their party is doing things. So they decide to break away and start their own third party. This happened in 1968 when George Wallace left the Democratic Party, started the American Independent Party, and became its presidential candidate.



Taft campaigned for the presidency in 1909.



Volunteers work for their political parties by doing many things.

Third parties can influence the government even though they have far less power than the two major parties. A third-party candidate has never been elected President of the United States, and few have been elected to Congress. Some third-party candidates have been elected to state and local governments. Third parties sometimes affect elections. If a third-party candidate gets enough votes to keep any candidate from winning a majority of votes, then another election between the top vote-getters may be held. Then those candidates still in the race work for votes that had gone to the third-party candidate.

Joining a Political Party

Every citizen can join a party because there are no dues and no age requirements for membership. The only requirement parties have is that people think of themselves as party members. Party members often do volunteer work for their party. Volunteers work at mailing political letters, making campaign phone calls, and raising campaign money. Political parties depend on volunteers to do much of the work during a campaign. In this way political parties are able to save money.

Who Can Vote?

Free and fair elections are important in every democracy. Since 1787, more groups of people have been given the right to

registration
filling out a form

vote. Amendments have been added to the Constitution allowing African Americans, women, and people who are eighteen years old to vote.

People must meet four requirements in order to vote in local, state, and national elections. The first requirement is that the voter must be at least eighteen years old. American citizenship is the second requirement in all states. Voters can be citizens by birth or through naturalization. Third, a person must live in the state for a certain amount of time, usually about thirty days. The fourth requirement is **registration**. All states except North Dakota require voters to register. When people register, their names are added to the list of voters for their state. This list is used to check off the names of people as they vote on Election Day. It is used to stop people from voting more than once, and it prevents people from voting if they do not meet requirements. Voters receive a voter registration card, which shows that they are able to vote.

Nonvoting

In every election there are qualified voters who choose not to vote. In the 1988 presidential election, almost half of the nation's qualified voters did not vote. Many people feel that having so many voters who do not vote is a big problem since elections should speak for all Americans.

There are seven reasons why many people do not vote. First, people may feel they have not learned enough about the candidates and the issues in order to make choices at the polls.



Voters in all states but North Dakota must register in order to vote.

They don't understand the differences between the candidates.

Second, some people feel that their one vote does not make a difference, so they don't bother to go to the polls. Third, some people either dislike all of the candidates, or they feel that both candidates are good choices, so they choose not to vote for either. Fourth, some people don't vote because they don't care very much about who wins or loses. They don't believe the election results will change the way government works. Fifth, people don't vote because they don't feel strong ties to a political party. They don't feel they should support a political party's candidate.

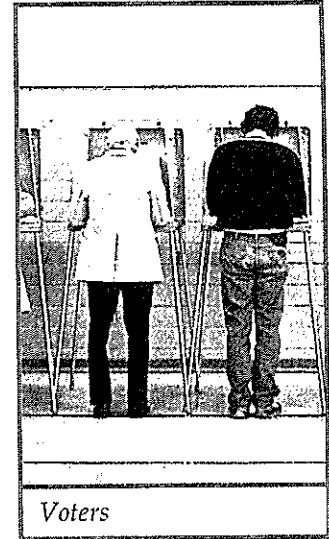
Sixth, there are people who want to vote but cannot do so. It is difficult for people with disabilities, seriously ill people, and people without transportation to get to the polls. Sometimes party volunteers drive these people to the polls. Finally, some citizens are not familiar with their state's registration process. They do not know how to become registered voters, and they do not bother to find out.

Who Are the Voters?

We do know what kind of person does vote in elections. The average voter is usually more than 35 years old, white, married, and has more education and income than most nonvoters. Voters are often party members who feel a strong tie to their party. They want to support their party's candidates and issues. The average voter believes each vote is important in deciding the nation's future.

There are many ways for voters to become informed about the candidates and their platforms. Newspapers, magazines, and television news are three common ways for voters to get information. Often candidates participate in debates. Watching these debates is an excellent way to learn about the candidates.

Democracy, as we have seen, depends on people being active in their government. Every year, in every part of the nation, citizens have the chance to vote for candidates and issues. Elections allow the United States to be a government by the people because voters make decisions for the nation. The voice of the American people is heard when they cast their votes on Election Day.





Using What You Learned

Comprehension — *Who Said It?*

Read each statement. Then look in the box for the person who might have said it. Write the name of the person you choose on the blank after each sentence.

party volunteer
candidate

average voter
third-party leader

nonvoter

1. "My political party nominated me to run for governor in the state election."

2. "I don't understand the differences between the candidates in the election, so I will not vote in this election." _____
3. "I am more than 35 years old, I went to college, and I really want the candidate from my political party to win, so I must go to the polls and vote."

4. "I was not happy with the Democrats or Republicans, so I broke away and started my own political party." _____
5. "I work hard for my political party without being paid because I believe my party has the best goals for the United States." _____

Vocabulary — *Choosing Vocabulary*

Choose a word or phrase from the box to complete each sentence. Write that word or phrase on the blank.

platform
registration

average
third party

candidate
transportation

polling place

1. A _____ is a person who runs for office in an election.

2. A party _____ contains the political party's main ideas and goals.
3. The place where people vote is called the _____.
4. In all but one state, _____ is required before a person can vote.
5. Sometimes people leave one of the two major parties and form a _____.
6. Sometimes people do not vote because they have no _____.
7. The _____ voter is over 35, married, and educated.

Critical Thinking — *Drawing Conclusions*

Read the paragraph below and the sentences that follow it. Put a check in front of the conclusions that can be drawn from the paragraph.

Political parties choose candidates and campaign for them to win elections. In Congress members of the same political parties sit together and work together. The President of the United States is the leader of his political party. Once in office a President appoints members of his party to be leaders in the executive branch.

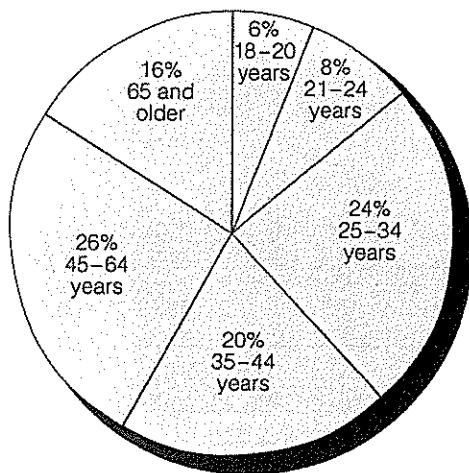
- _____ 1. Political parties are important in American government.
- _____ 2. Congress is organized by political parties.
- _____ 3. People who belong to the President's political party have a better chance of being appointed to the executive branch.
- _____ 4. Third parties can affect election results.
- _____ 5. Political parties are necessary for nominating and campaigning for candidates.
- _____ 6. American government is controlled by a two-party system.
- _____ 7. Political parties are involved in many ways in government.

Skill Builder

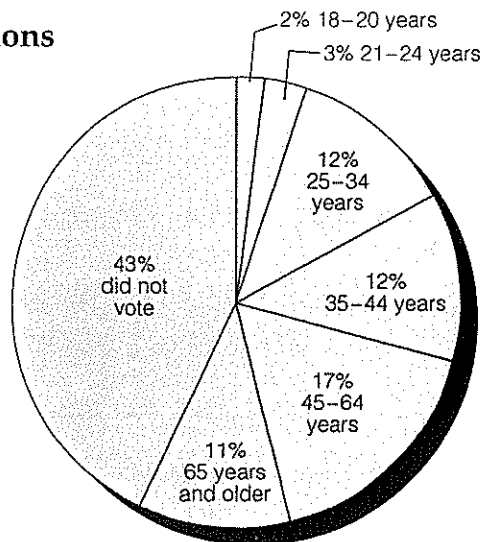
Comparing Circle Graphs

The two circle graphs below are about the voting population in the 1988 presidential election. Study and compare the two circle graphs. Then use the information in the graphs to answer the questions.

1988 Elections



People Who Could Have Voted, by age group



People Who Did Vote, by age group

1. What ages were the smallest group of people that actually voted?

2. What ages were the three largest groups of people who actually voted?

3. What percent of the people actually voted in 1988? _____
4. What percent of the people aged 25-34 who could have voted actually did vote?

5. Compare the percentages of people in the 18-24 age group who could vote with those who actually voted. Draw one conclusion from your comparison.



Chapter 15

Campaigns and Elections

Consider As You Read

- What is the campaign process?
- Why are campaigns expensive, and how do candidates pay for them?
- How do candidates influence voters?

News reporters were ready and waiting when George Bush made his announcement. He told reporters that he planned to become a Republican candidate in the 1988 presidential election. Within a few hours, news reports about Bush's decision had reached every part of the nation.

All candidates' campaigns begin when they announce their candidacy. It is just the beginning of a long process that has many steps. In this chapter we will look at that process.



Lyndon B. Johnson announced his candidacy for President in 1960. He became the Vice President with John F. Kennedy.

Nominating Presidential Candidates

ballot
a form used for voting

nominate
select; choose

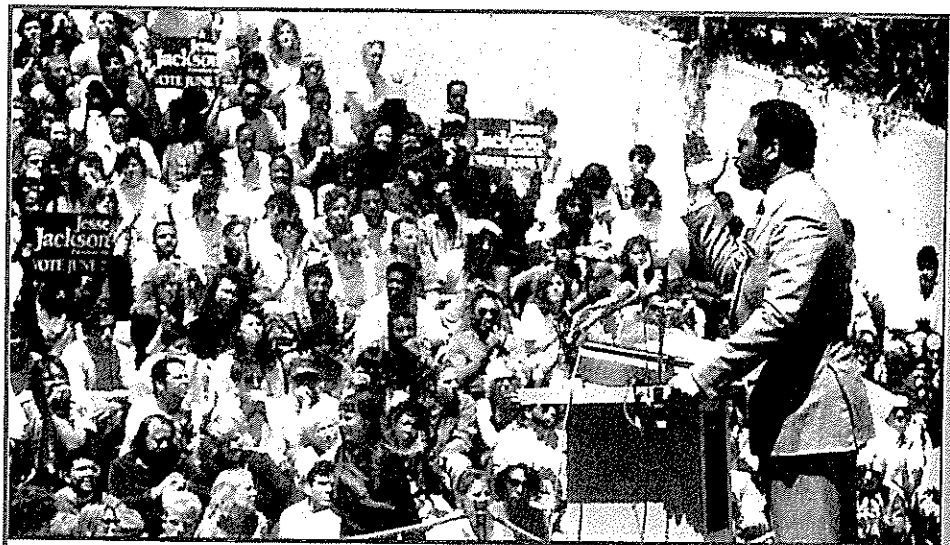
primary elections
elections at state level that
are held before the
national election

As much as two years before the election, people announce their plans to become presidential candidates. Many people in each party will declare candidacy in both parties. But only one from each party can be on the **ballot** on election day. Once the announcements have been made, the difficult job of campaigning begins.

A political party can **nominate** only one person to be its presidential candidate for the general election. Since many people announce that they want to be their party's candidate, primary elections and a national party convention are held to select one candidate to represent each party. Delegates to the national convention elect one candidate who will be that party's choice for President.

At the **primary elections**, voters choose delegates to the convention, and in some states they vote on the candidate of their choice. All announced candidates can be on the ballot in the party's primary elections. In states that do not have primaries, people at political party meetings choose their delegates. Each announced candidate tries to win as many primary elections and as many convention delegates as possible.

As the months pass, candidates who lose important primary elections drop out of the presidential race. They realize they will not have enough delegate votes to win their party's nomination. Candidates who run out of campaign money also



Candidates, like Jesse Jackson, make thousands of speeches.



Delegates to the national convention vote for the candidate of their choice.

drop out of the race. By the time the national convention is held, only a few candidates from each party are left in the presidential race.

The Democrats and Republicans hold separate national conventions during the summer before the presidential election. The purpose of these conventions is to nominate one person to be the party's candidate in the presidential election and to decide on the party platform.

During the convention delegates from every state elect a candidate to represent the party in the November election. The person who wins the most delegate votes wins the party's nomination to be its presidential candidate. After winning the nomination, the presidential candidate chooses a party member to be the vice presidential candidate. Each candidate gives a speech during the convention, which is heard over television and radio by interested Americans.

Paying for Campaigns

After the conventions the presidential candidates continue their campaigns across the nation. These campaigns cost millions of dollars. The candidates know that to be elected they must become known to the millions of voters across the nation. They cannot reach all those people unless they have

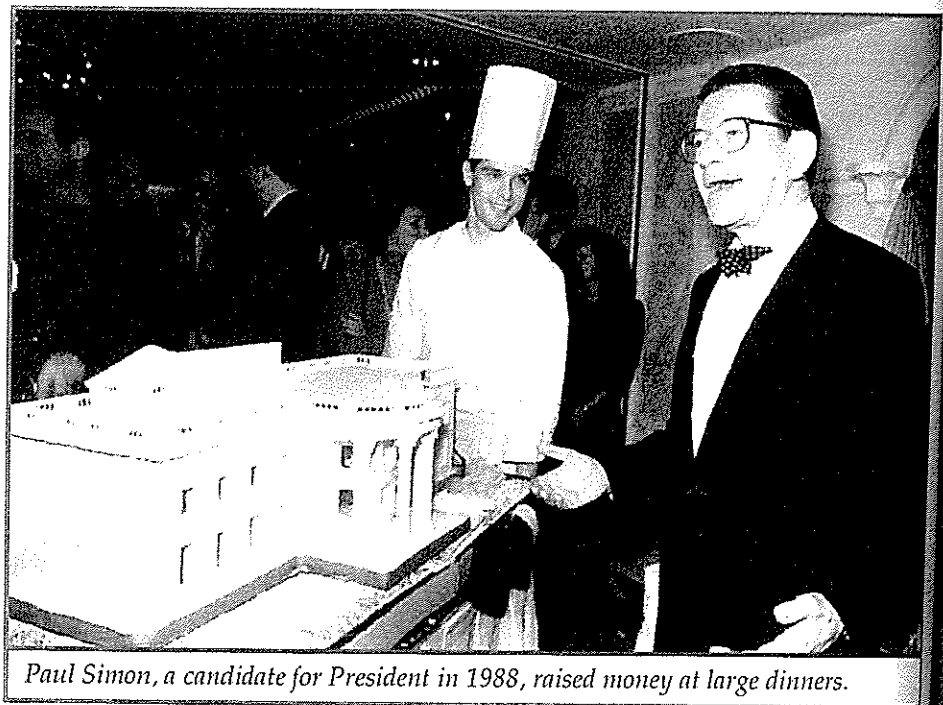
large amounts of money to pay for their campaigns. In 1988, Bush and Dukakis each spent a little more than 46 million dollars on their campaigns.

Campaign money is spent in five different ways. First, candidates spend millions of dollars on advertising. Advertising is probably the easiest way to reach the voters. But each television commercial or newspaper advertisement costs thousands of dollars. Each party also pays for campaign buttons, hats, bumper stickers, and posters for people who support that candidate.

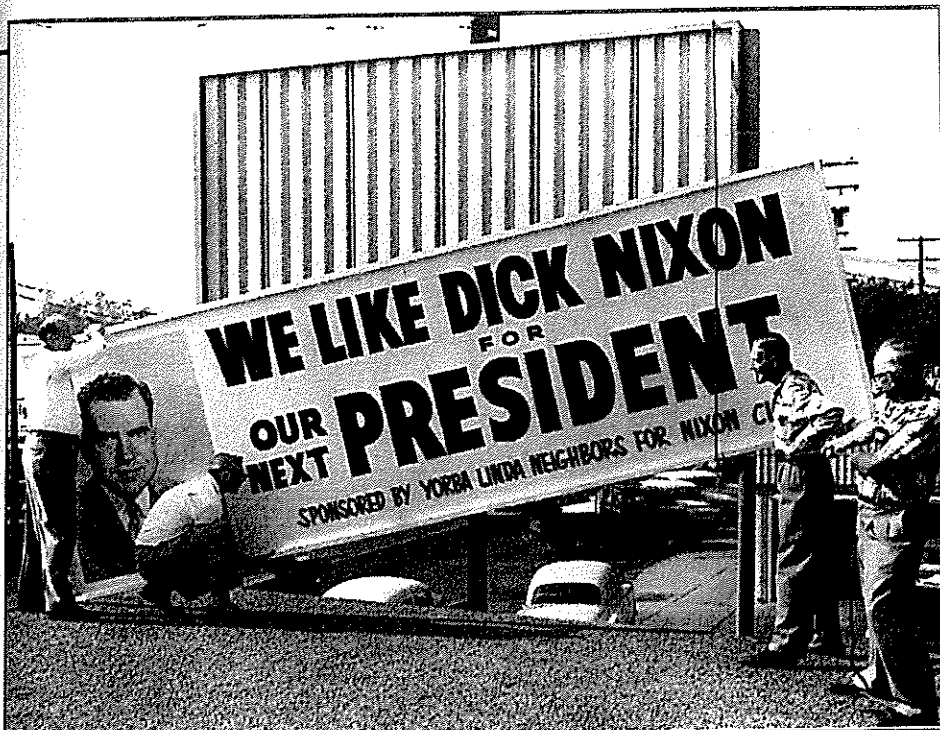
Second, candidates travel to different states and speak with thousands of citizens at meetings and at **rallies**. Plane travel and hotel rooms are a big expense. Third, political parties rent many campaign offices in every state. Rent, telephone bills, and electric bills must be paid for every office. Fourth, professional campaign workers are paid large salaries to direct and manage the campaign. Although volunteers do lots of campaign work, professional managers, press secretaries, and speech writers are needed.

Fifth, campaigns are expensive because they last a long time. A campaign can begin two years before a general election when candidacy is first announced. For the next two years, money must be spent on all kinds of advertisements, travel expenses, campaign managers, and speech writers.

rallies
large groups of people
gathered for a political
reason



Paul Simon, a candidate for President in 1988, raised money at large dinners.



This was the first billboard put up for Richard Nixon, in 1959. It was put up in the town where he was born.

Sources of Campaign Money

Political parties work hard to raise millions of dollars for campaigns from citizens and from businesses. People pay to attend fund-raising events such as dinners and picnics. Candidates send letters and make phone calls asking for citizens to contribute large or small amounts of money to the campaign. Political action committees (PACs), which will be discussed in Chapter 16, also give large amounts of money to campaigns. The candidates themselves often spend their own money on their campaigns.

Congress has tried to limit campaign spending. It has passed laws to limit the amount of money individuals and PACs can contribute to presidential campaigns. These laws were passed because many people believed that the President might give special favors, such as jobs, to people who gave large amounts of money to the campaigns.

Since 1971, Congress has passed several laws to give **public funds** to presidential candidates. Public funds come from the nation's taxpayers. Public funds make it easier for candidates to pay for their campaigns. Because public funds can be given to candidates who are running in primary elections, it has become easier for people to become candidates in the primaries.

public funds
money from citizens

public opinion
what the citizens think

propaganda
ways of persuading
people

media
television, radio,
newspapers, magazines



Candidate Nixon

Influencing Public Opinion

As soon as candidates are nominated at the political party conventions, they begin working to influence voters and win their votes. Every day counts in the effort to win as many votes as possible. To win votes candidates must influence **public opinion**. By using advertisements and by traveling to meet voters, candidates hope to influence public opinion.

Propaganda is one of the methods used to influence public opinion. Propaganda uses facts, pictures, and sounds to persuade people how to vote. During a campaign, propaganda is used to create images about candidates and their opponents.

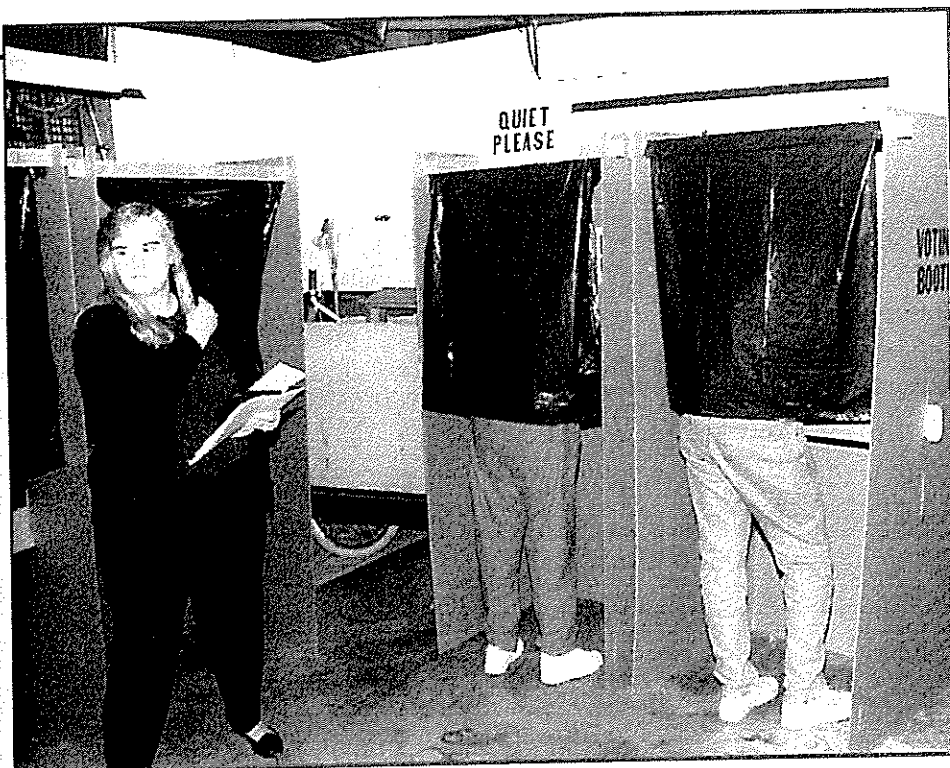
The **media** plays an important role in influencing public opinion. Candidates want to be seen and heard often on television and radio. Each party hires press secretaries to keep the media informed of its candidate's activities. Several television debates are held to help voters learn what each candidate thinks about important issues.

A presidential candidate needs the right image to be popular with the voters. Some members of the campaign staff are hired to help candidates improve their image. These staff members make sure the candidate wears the right clothes, has the right hairstyle, speaks well, and acts friendly.

Measuring Public Opinion

Candidates want to know if their advertising and campaign methods are working to win votes. They depend on public opinion polls to find out how well they are influencing voters. To take a public opinion poll, a small part of the population that is representative of the whole population answers questions. The answers given by the sample population show how most of the population would probably vote.

The results of public opinion polls are reported in the news. The polls show campaign managers how well their candidate is doing. If the poll shows that the opponent is winning, then the managers will plan different campaign methods to win more votes. The results of public opinion polls also influence the voters. When a poll tells voters which candidate is losing, many voters decide they would rather vote for the winning candidate.



On Election Day, people vote for the candidate of their choice.

At the Voting Polls

After months of campaigning, Election Day finally arrives, and the voters cast their votes to choose the nation's next President. Registration is checked at the polling places before voters are allowed to vote. Campaigning is not allowed at the polling places.

Across the nation citizens cast their votes on secret ballots. Each person's freedom of choice at the polls is protected with secret ballots.

After all the voting polls in the nation have closed at night, the votes are counted and the winner is announced. Americans eagerly watch television and listen to radio to learn who their new President will be.

This long process of electing the nation's new President involves many people. But in the end, it is in the voting booth that all Americans have the opportunity to let their voice be heard.



Using What You Learned

Vocabulary — Writing With Vocabulary Words

Use six or more words in the box to write a paragraph that tells how candidates campaign to win elections.

ballot	public funds	nomination
political convention	public opinion	media
public opinion poll	propaganda	candidate
fund-raising		

Comprehension — Write the Questions

Below are the answers for some questions from this chapter. Read each answer. Then write your own question above each answer. Use the question words to help you.

1. What _____?

Separate elections are held by the political parties in many states to choose delegates to the national convention.

2. What _____?

During the summer before each presidential election, political party delegates meet to nominate a presidential candidate and write a party platform.

3. Why _____ ?

A presidential campaign must pay for television commercials, plane travel, campaign offices, and a campaign staff.

4. What _____ ?

Facts, pictures, and sounds are used to influence public opinion.

5. What _____ ?

In order to influence public opinion, campaigns create images about candidates and their opponents.

6. Why _____ ?

Campaign managers need to measure public opinion in order to know whether their campaign methods are winning votes.

7. What _____ ?

People go to polling places and vote on the candidates of their choice.

Critical Thinking — *Distinguishing Relevant Information*

Imagine you want to explain to a new American citizen how political campaigns try to influence public opinion. Read each sentence below. Decide which sentences are relevant to what you will say. Put a check in front of the four relevant sentences.

_____ 1. Every presidential candidate must choose a vice presidential candidate.

_____ 2. Candidates travel across the nation to meet thousands of voters.

_____ 3. Candidates use propaganda to persuade citizens not to vote for their opponents.

_____ 4. Public funds make it easier for candidates to enter primary elections.

_____ 5. Many people contribute to a candidate's campaign fund.

_____ 6. To win the party's nomination, a candidate must win many primaries.

_____ 7. Television commercials and newspaper advertisements are an important part of a campaign.

_____ 8. Campaign managers try to create the right image for their candidate.

People in Government

Peggy Noonan (1950–)

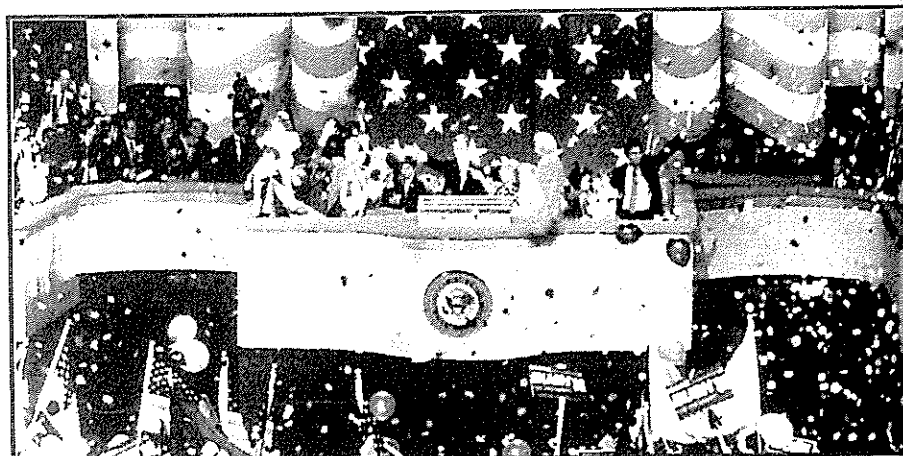


Peggy Noonan

On the campaign trail, candidates may give several speeches in one day. They do not have the time to write their own speeches. Sometimes they do not have the ability to write a good speech. They often hire people to write their speeches. One of these speech writers was Peggy Noonan.

Noonan began her career as a writer of television news programs. As a member of the Republican Party, Noonan admired Ronald Reagan and wanted to help him. So she was pleased when asked to join the White House staff as a speech writer. Noonan spent time listening to Reagan talk so that the speeches she wrote would sound like him. However, she did not write the President's speeches alone. Reagan and his staff provided the facts, and other speech writers helped. Then White House staff members corrected her work.

When George Bush announced his presidential candidacy, he asked Noonan to be one of his speech writers. Noonan wanted Bush to win, so she wrote campaign speeches for the primary elections. Bush asked her to write his acceptance speech for his nomination at the Republican National Convention. She spent weeks using Bush's ideas to write a moving speech. One of the phrases Noonan put in the speech, "a thousand points of light," became a phrase that Bush used often in his campaign. Noonan wrote many speeches for Bush throughout his campaign. In this way she helped Bush win the election.



George Bush gave his acceptance speech in August 1988.